RESTORATION REVIEW

The Restoration Mind . . .

THE NATURE OF RESTORATION

For the next two years we will be studying the general theme of *The Restoration Mind,* after which it will be issued in book form, some 320 pages' worth. This means that most of what we publish in the next twenty issues will be in reference to this theme, however indirectly. In the series in this column, however, we shall endeavor to speak explicity of the nature of Restoration and the mind that espouses it.

Such is the mission of this first issue. It is our intention that each of the articles in some way identifies the Restoration mind. This is certainly the intention of the essay that draws heavily upon the poetry of Robert Frost (see *A Lover's Quarrel with the Church of Christ*), which to a remarkable degree illustrates the Restoration spirit. A restorationist may not be a poet, but he is poetic in that he realizes that some of the more important truths are more subjective than objective, more "of the heart" than propositional. Every lover is a poet at heart, and religion is a love story.

The piece by the young psychologist, *Amazing Guilt, Amazing Grace,* deals with the sick soul burdened with guilt and no way out, except by grace. This is another way of identifying the healthy-minded religion of the restorationist. Even the report from Abilene serves our cause, for it is an example of how a people, long shut up to obscurantism, can open up its dead-end streets and allow traffic to move both ways without serious mishap.

Restoration has to do with returning a thing to its original character and purpose. The boyhood home of a dignitary is sometimes *restored,* which means that it is refurbished into what it was long ago. This, however, is only *partial* restoration, for quite obviously the house cannot be returned to the purpose it once had. It is a restoration in looks or appearance only. The restoration of primitive Christianity calls for a return to the *character* and *purpose* of the religion of Jesus Christ.

The restoration of a great piece of art better illustrates our point, such a work of art that may have been seriously damaged in the recent flood in Florence, Italy. Some priceless pieces were broken and covered with mud, discolored and corroded. Skilled hands have been at work for years in restoring them to their pristine beauty. It is not simply a matter of removing mud, but doing it in such a way as to do no injury to the painting. Each work of art has its own unique character, which must be safeguarded by

restoration efforts. Each has the purpose of conveying the mind of its creator and providing a thing of beauty and excellence to the beholder, which must not be lost in the task of returning it to its original state.

This illustration points up an important truth about restoration, and that is the implication that the thing to be restored is still around, in essence at least. One might restore a damaged Rembrandt, but not one that has been washed out to sea and is completely lost. That the church has been "seriously damaged" through the centuries is true enough, but it has not become non-existent. It is not the church that is to be restored, certainly not in the sense of becoming reconstituted, as if it has passed from history and it is our task to get it started again.

The community of heaven has been a reality upon earth since the time our Lord declared: "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of death shall not prevail against it." The church has been here all along, just as Jesus said it would. The true restorationist has no illusions about reestablishing the church. His task is rather to restore *to* the church deficiencies that have occurred through the centuries. Unity is one of these. Divisiveness has seriously threatened both the character and purpose of God's assembly on earth. By nature the church is *one* (character) so that the world may be *won* (purpose). Jesus himself prayed: "May they all be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee. so also may they be in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me." The church divided is still the Lord's church, but it is terribly deficient in regards to its true character and purpose. Still, it is unity that we are to restore to the church, and not the church itself that we are to restore. The difference is important.

The restoration mind recognizes that while Christians are fragmented into many sects and parties that the body of Christ is nonetheless a reality upon earth. The church is made up of all the redeemed ones, all those called of God through the gospel to be His own. They may be scattered throughout the vales and hills of sectdom, but still they are the church. The Baptist Church, the Methodist Church, or the Church of Christ may not be true churches of Jesus Christ, for His church is one. Perhaps they are sects, but they are sects within the broader framework of the church. This is to say that they are indeed the church, even though divided and fractured, in the sense that the body of Christ is amongst them. Any party that has a Christian in it is to that extent the church.

This is to say that the church is so badly torn and divided that the only semblance of objective reality it has is in the sects and parties of Christendom. In driving through any modern city one can see many evidences of the Christian religion, not only in the form of the many denominations that profess Christ, but also by the presence of schools, hospitals, and other institutions of mercy and goodwill. The res-

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torationist does not write all this off as naught, as if wholly divorced from the religion of Jesus Christ, even if he finds no form of religion that conforms to his notion of "the true church." There is an important sense in which he can say, as he surveys the scene, *the body of Christ is in this city.* There may be work to do in making it all that Jesus intended, and that is the work of restoration, but still it is His church. There may be no party or parties in the city to which he can go and say this is the church, the true church of Christ. And yet he can be assured that the church is in the city. The various sects are not the church, but the church is in the various sects!

This places all the restoration movements, and there have been many, in proper perspective. No true restoration effort has its goal to restore the church, for this implies that it does not exist. The purpose is rather to restore to the church that already exists those qualities that will return it to the character and purpose intended by its Founder.

An automobile that lies damaged in a ditch, with its body crushed and its motor dislodged, may bear the name of *Ford,* and yet be a far cry from what its manufacturer and designer intended and remarkably different from what it was when it rolled off the assembly line in Detroit. It would be understandable for someone to say while looking at the mess in the ditch: "If that is what Ford puts out, then I don't want one!" Someone would need to explain to him that what he sees in the ditch is not what Ford intended, and that with proper *restoration* the automobile will once again reflect the character and purpose of its maker. But it would be improper for someone to exclaim: "That's no Ford!" However wrecked it may be it is still a Ford. The only question is what might be done to repair the damage and return it to its pristine condition. The word *pristine* is especially useful in this context, for this gets at the task of restoration: to return to the original character and purpose. Once restored the car not only looks like a Ford once again, but it also functions like one.

The Lord's church may also lie wrecked in scores of sectarian ditches, almost beyond the point of recognition. Still it is in some sense the Lord's, even if like the Phoenix, that mythical bird of antiquity, its very decadence has within it the seeds of rebirth. Jesus talked this way about the church at Sardis. "You are dead," he said to them. But he also said: "Wake up, and put some strength into what is left, which must otherwise die!" It is the "what is left" that gives the restorationist his hope, whether in an almost unrecognizable Rembrandt, a wrecked car, or a decadent church.

After all, Jesus did write "to the angel of the church at Sardis." He called it the church. "Yet you have a few persons in Sardis who have not polluted their clothing," he pointed to as "what is left."

Wherever we are, whatever congregation, the Lord gives each of us as restorationists something to work with. Out of decadence he can bring life, if we will let him use us.

Unity is basic to all our tasks of restoration, for a divided church cannot win a divided world. The very nature and function of the church is dependent upon our healing the wounds of division. But this is not, to be sure, our only problem.

There is the question of social responsibility, the church's task in reference to injustice and suffering. There is the church's ministry to its own members, its responsibility to edify itself. There are its institutions, baptism and the Lord's Supper in particular. There is the morality of its members or the ethics of God's community. There are its structural forms, if any, such as organization, work, worship.

All these concern us in tracing out the restoration mind. The authenticity of the church is challenged today more than ever before in its history. It is fighting for its life in modern culture, the "institutional church" is at least. That poses still another question: is the "institutional church" the church? Future installments of this series have many obligations, but we will be especially concerned with the individual's responsibility to the *status quo.*

Many are burdened with the presumptions of modern religion. They are disillusioned by the superficialities of the system and its leaders. They are starved for meaning, relevance, and excitement. They long to be "turned on" to the reality of Jesus. They want the joyous hope of the early Christians, their resources of power, their spontaneity. They are tired of being dead. "Going to church" is a bore, being a spectator instead of a participant is debilitating.

The restoration mind is a responsive mind. It seeks answers by seeking truth, the truth of Jesus. We hope in this extended series to help the individual restorationist to better understand his task and to provide him some light in his plight as part of modern religion.—*the Editor*

A LOVER'S QUARREL WITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

It was the poet Robert Frost who requested that his epitaph read: *He had a lover's quarrel with the world.* Mr. Frost's life and labors give witness to his love for the world, even if they fall short of depicting him as a quarreling man. The request for such an epitaph was his way of saying "I love you" to the world, an acknowledgment evident enough in his writings, he would no doubt suppose, and yet all too vague to a poetically-illiterate world. Poets, like philosophers and all other reformers, can hardly expect the luxury of being understood.

If Robert Frost had a quarrel with the world, the converse of that is hardly the case, for the world, especially the United States, has honored him as it has few men of letters in all its history. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Literature *four* times, and he had numerous honorary degrees bestowed on him by top universities at home and abroad. He was a professor at Amherst, Dartmouth and Harvard. During our "Cold War" with the Iron Curtain, Frost went to Moscow to visit Khrushchev, where he read his immortal *Mending Wall.* In that poem he tells of two men mending the wall that separated them. They worked so closely together that their hands touched, and finally they entered into conversation. The wall was really fragile, as are all the walls that keep men from being brothers, and it had to be repaired every spring or it

would fall down on its own. "Good fences make good neighbors," said one man over and over, alluding more to the traditions and prejudices that separate men than to the actual wall. The other responds, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall, that wants it down."

And it was Frost who prepared a special poem for the nation's new president, which he was to have read at Kennedy's Inauguration in 1961, only to have been hindered by the elements and fading eyesight. Instead he recited from memory an earlier poem, *The Gift Outright,* which he thought should set the tone for a nation at the threshold of creative greatness. It is only in giving ourselves outright that we can become a noble people, he told the Inauguration assembly.

That Robert Frost loved us is clear enough, but it is not so obvious as to just what his quarrel was about. The only piece that I have used in the classroom from his pen is his *After Apple-Picking,* which points to the old-fashioned virtues of New England rural life. The farmer is through with apple-picking as winter sets in. He is drowsy and about to fall asleep, with his two-pointed ladder still sticking through a tree and an unfilled barrel nearby. Before falling off to sleep he keeps thinking of the experience he had that day in looking at the world through a pane of glass that he had skimmed from the drinking trough. As he held it against "the world of hoary grass," it melted and he let it fall and break. Then he falls asleep only to dream of apples.

Maybe this is his quarrel with the world, or part of it. The world is painful to look upon with naked and realistic eye, with all its unnecessary evil and suffering. It helps to have something artificial to look through, or some anesthetic that blunts the reality of it all. It is sinful and unredeemed, too complex for a simple farmer to cope with.

President Kennedy was referring to this matter of Frost being honored by the very world with which he had a quarrel when he observed, "If Robert Frost was much honored during his lifetime, it was because a good many preferred to ignore his darker truths." Men have a way of enthroning error and crucifying truth, to paraphrase another poet, so it may be in the case of Robert Frost that the world honored his verse but ignored his point.

And his point was that life is to be lived honestly and with sensitivity, without sham and pretense. The simple virtues of the individual with integrity are to be preferred over the hollowness of ostentation. Frost wrote about the simple life with its dark woods and snow, its fall and autumns, its brooks and vales. His was a restoration mind that sought to recoup for man his lost individuality, restoring genuineness for superficiality.

In *Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening* he describes himself as enthralled by the scene before him. The simple beauty of the silent woods beckon him to tarry longer and bask in nature's glory. But he must hurry along.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Frost wants us to see ourselves as individuals with our own unique potentials and obligations. This looms

strong in his poem about the unstamped letter in the rural mailbox, in which a tramp thanks the farmer for the use of his woods for the night. Under "a low-swung juniper" the tramp beholds wonders in the sky. Conceding that the farmer may perchance have seen the same, he says: "'Tis possible you may have seen, albeit through a rusty screen, the same sign Heaven showed your guest."

This is the world with which Robert Frost had a lover's quarrel: a world that keeps mending fences that keep men divided; a world that beholds Heaven's glories through rusty screens; a world that waits and dreams even when duty beckons; a world that stops too long to rest when it has miles and miles to go before it sleeps.

I am not saying that I want my epitaph to read: *He had a lover's quarrel with the Church of Christ,* for it would be best that I have no epitaph at all. But I am saying that this is the point of this journal. To be sure, I have a quarrel with the brotherhood, for there is much that I am unhappy about. But I like the way Frost puts it, and the sentiment is also mine. It may be a quarrel but it is a *lover's* quarrel. My problem is different from Frost's. The world could see his love but not his quarrel, while the church sees my quarrel (sort of) but not my love.

His advantage was that he quarreled in the best of poetry, while my quarrel is in less than the best of prose. But mine too is a lover's quarrel. I insist upon that, whether prose or poetry. I do love my brethren and I do love the Church of Christ—and there is some difference between the two references.

It is folly for a man to try to *prove* that he loves, for if his love is not otherwise evident no one will be convinced, and that is not the point of this article. It is rather a testimonial of my love, which all my readers may not accept. Love does not always show through, even when it is there. Even Paul had to affirm his love to the Corinthians. And which of the prophets did not love? And yet they were treated as if they did not. Jesus loved most of all, but he had to suffer as if he did not love.

If I *should* seek to prove my love, I would point to the fact that I haven't left to join somebody else. I stick around even when the atmosphere is not always conducive to sticking around. Too, I keep trying, year after year. Men who stay with their wives like that are suspected of having a little love. And what would my purpose be, going through all this for half a lifetime and at my own expense, if it were not that I cared. If you accuse me of having a quarrel with the Church of Christ, the church of my youth and the only church I've ever known, I would grant that such is the case. But it is a *lover's* quarrel, believe me.

So, I love you, pure and simple, just as you are and without fanfare; and even if you don't believe it, it is still so. Reject me you may. Doubt me you may. Ignore me you may. But you can't keep me from loving you. There is nothing you can do about that. And there isn't much you can do about my quarreling. So I will keep on loving and keep on quarreling. A lover's quarrel! The love will never end; the quarrel will continue until we become a freer and more responsible brotherhood. I'm like a lovin', fussin' schoolteacher!

What caught my interest in Frost's

quarrel with the world is that his complaints are similar to those I have of the Church of Christ, if indeed I have correctly interpreted his criticisms.

Frost wants man to be free and responsible, an individual in his own right, bigger than creed or race or institution. That is what I expect of the Church of Christ. I don't want it to be white, middle-class, or southern. I want it to be catholic as well as apostolic. And I want it to be God's congregation on earth, the community of the redeemed, a *confessing* community as well as a professing community.

Frost quarreled with the world because of its insensitivity. In one poem a child's arm is amputated in an accident on the farm. Now he lives but bleeds. Now he's dead. But the world goes on, not caring enough. I too am angry that our people do not care enough. Virtually ignoring the social implications of the gospel, we are content to build our towers of Babel (a church plant finished in Ft. Worth this month cost two million!) while the world is aflame with poverty, injustice, and crime, with all the attending frustrations. People bleed and die, and we care too little. We are not a people who reaches forth to touch the world's wounds.

Frost wrote a lot about walls and fences that separate people needlessly, with most of the differences artificial rather than real. I too have this quarrel with the church, for we too are wall-menders. I am angry because we allow our clergy to keep alive the old divisions, mostly because of pride, prejudice or vested interests, when if it were left up to the rank and file the walls would have long since disappeared, fragile as they are. Frost did not accept the tradition that "Good fences make good neighbors," for there is something in man that wants the fence to go. Neither do walls make for better churches. I will keep on quarreling until we quit mending fences and allow love to have its way.

The world's fear of the unfamiliar and its unwillingness to take the less traveled road was another of Frost's complaints. In *A Hundred Collars* Frost tells the story of a professor who misses his train in a one-hotel town only to learn that if he sleeps in a bed he will have to share a room with a stranger. His desire for rest is complicated by the sight of a man sleeping in the office chair rather than take the room with the stranger, for fear of being robbed and murdered. The frail professor takes his chance with the stranger, only to find that he is huge, wearing a collar size 18 while his size is but 14. And the man drinks. It turns out that the stranger is friendly, even offering to send him 100 collars, size 14, that he wore when he was smaller, and he tries to ease the professor's fear and mistrust of him. He points out that he has 90 dollars on him while the professor has but 5 dollars, that he has greater cause for fear. He finally goes out for a night on the town, leaving the prof quaking in bed, and telling him: "There's nothing I'm scared of like scared people."

It all sounds mightily like church folk who are too scared to reach out into the unfamiliar. We'd rather sleep in the office chair than take a chance with strangers, and when we do venture forth we find them with more trust, love, and kindness than ourselves —even if not as righteous! Generally

we socialize only with our own kind. We want other folk to come our way and hear our preachers, but we're not much on fraternizing with them. Of course we have the truth, and that does make a difference. It may be all right as long as we don't miss any trains and have need of others.

The Road Not Taken is the same theme, for it depicts man's reluctance to take the lonely, rugged way. He wants the often-traveled, well-worn road of ease and certainty. But Frost's hero, standing at a fork in the road, takes the less-traveled way, "because it was grassy and wanted wear." The poet observes that it makes a big difference which road one takes, the one the crowd takes or the other.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Many of us in the Church of Christ, especially among the younger set, can appreciate the truth of that verse. We stood at the fork of the road, the way the party takes and the other way, and in taking "the one less traveled by" it has made all the difference in the world.

I am convinced that that way is the way of freedom and the way of glory. He who takes that road will walk with Christ. The oft-traveled road is patrolled by the party, and it too has its rewards, but only those that men can bestow.

I must quarrel, lovingly quarrel, so long as we put party above principle, and even above personality. We will destroy those ministers among us, even taking bread from their mouths, who break party ranks. A man's reputation means nothing if in destroying it we preserve the party image. The way we read it, man *is* made for the sabbath, not the sabbath for man.

Finally, there is in Frost a feel for the mystery of life and a reverence for truth that is hard to come by. The world makes truth too easy and the mysterious too common. He writes of the "enormous Outer Black" symbolized in dark, thick woods and overhanging clouds. He even speaks of the appalling "design of darkness," and sees some of nature's work as "like the ingredients of a witches' broth." Well aware of the heavy hand of evil in the world, he realized that man must struggle to bear along what light he can find.

She always had to burn a light
Beside her attic bed at night.
It gave bad dreams and broken sleep,
But helped the Lord her soul to keep.
Good gloom on her was thrown away.
It is on me by night or day,
Who have, as I suppose, ahead
The darkest of it still to dread.

No one is in such darkness as those of us who suppose that we have all light. There are those who rejoice in what little light they have, even if but a candle at one's bedside at night. Truth does not come so easily as for any of us to suppose that we have all there is to have, while in truth we may have but very little.

There is hope in the poetry of Robert Frost. Not only is there a lamp to carry into the deep, dark forest, but there is also beyond the woods *a clearing*. It is noteworthy that his long career as a poet ended with the publication of *In the Clearing*. Here he tells us that we can "push the woods back from around the house,

and part them in the middle with a path." So ended his lover's quarrel with the world.

This is what I want for our Church of Christ people. I want us to see the deep, dark woods, the mystery of evil, and the complexity of truth. I will continue my quarrel until we can see the woods that surround us, that all is neither *light* nor *right* with us. And beyond the woods *the clearing!*

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

—the Editor

I—

UNITY MEETING IN ABILENE

They didn't call it that, but that is what it was, and a glorious one it was. It was officially the First Annual Preacher's Workshop, an unlikely name for what may prove to be the most important development in our recent history as a brotherhood. Upwards of 600 preachers gathered for the affair, and it was for preachers only, and that was emphasized. No one without a wedding garment was thrown out that we could tell, but it was made clear that only preachers were to be there, which created some discussion on just whom that included. I heard one brother suggest that brethren in general should rise up and affirm the priesthood of all believers and attend the affair. But there was really no ambiguity about the matter, for we all know who "our preachers" are. It just may be that we are not as candid as are others about our clergy-laity posture.

No tape recorders were allowed and none was bootlegged in that we could tell. J. D. Thomas, who directed the affair, also strongly urged that there be no publication of what was said there. If anyone chooses to publish his own remarks, he is to do so with no reference to it having been presented as part of the Workshop. While all this may be overly cautious, I appreciate the intentions that motivate the restrictions, and I shall respect J. D.'s wishes and restrict myself in this report to general observations. But it was a gathering of moment, one that we will surely have lasting effect upon our leadership, and it is a story that deserves to be told. J. D. wants the participants to feel free to say what they will, and he believes an airing of the procedures through tape and pen would discourage this. It says something about our internal affairs as a brotherhood that such precautions would be necessary, doesn't it?

In calling it a unity meeting I am saying that it was strikingly similar to many of the unity sessions that some of us have been sharing in for years. If it was a workshop, then it was a workshop in unity, love, fellowship, and togetherness. The name suits me fine. I just hope that no anti-workshop element emerges and the thing die aborning. J. D. admitted to entering into it with some trepidation, and he conceded in his initial remarks that it might be the first and *last* such meeting. That was to say that it was no ordinary *workshop,* which is about

as uncontroversial as a ladies' tea. It was a unity meeting that brought together several of the major wings of our fractured brotherhood, and it was conducted right there on the ACC campus, with the blessings and support of the administration. And I say three cheers for ACC, and that does not include *the last hurrah!* I predict that the response will be so tremendously favorable that it will be difficult for the men on the Hill to revert to less inspiring programs.

This was of course a gathering, for the most part, of what I choose to call "the main line Church of Christ," but there was a respectable representation of non-class and non-cooperative brethren, and at least one prominent brother from the Christian Church. But a meeting like this serves to show how much healthy diversity there is even in "the main-line." As I sat listening to one session that had to do with the nature of truth, where *both* sides were represented by "the main-line," I thought of an article I might write on *The Great Divide in the Church of Christ,* for these men were miles apart in their theology even though still "in fellowship" with each other. Others on the program were "out of fellowship" with the main-line, but the differences, measured in terms of classes and cooperative efforts, were superficial in comparison with those separated by the great divide. The "Great Divide" among us, if ever I write the article, will be the *right* and *left* of theological perspective. A better way of saying it would be in the words of a brother from up East, who said to me after listening to the session referred to above, some such words as "They have different Gods." Or we might say it is a different attitude toward grace and sin, toward Christ, toward truth. It is indeed a different religion, even if both sides are main-line Church of Christ.

There is nothing new about this, of course. It is the same story with every evolving denomination, or "religious body" if that innocuous term *denomination* is still offensive to you. For example, a radical right-winger like Carl McIntyre, who is a rebel among the Presbyterians, is closer in his theological posture to the Texas-style, Texas-size Southern Baptists than he is to most Presbyterians. Just so, some of our young princes, and they are not all so young, are actually closer to someone like Keith Miller, author of *The Taste of New Wine,* or Elton Trueblood than they are to the rank and file Church of Christ ministers, such as we have in Dallas. An illustration of this was the response I heard from these young princes to "the keynote address" given by the prominent editor from Austin, whom I think deserves some such honorific title as "Dean of Texas' Churches of Christ." He acts like our Dean and he is treated that way, and I'm not being critical. Anyway, I found myself much more appreciative of what he said than they, for he said some important things about unity. But it was what he didn't say that he should have said, as well as the implication of what he did say (such as unity being predicated upon "the pure doctrine," which of course means *our* interpretation) that turned them off. It was an interesting study: there they were "in fellowship" and there I was, something less than accepted, and I was closer to the Dean than they were, more sympathetic and more appreciative. It

is "the Great Divide" and it is far more significant than whether one is organic or inorganic.

The music question was discussed with a professor from Cincinnati Bible Seminary responding to an ACC professor. Women's work was discussed with a non-class brother exchanging views with a main-liner. The institutional question was aired (orphanages, Herald of Truth) with the negative view ably represented by a staff writer of *Gospel Guardian* and responded to by an ACC professor.

A black brother exchanged views with a white brother on the validity of our Restoration plea, with an obvious desire to make *social action* a part of that plea, suggesting that the plea is not valid without it. The relevance of the church and the nature of truth were discussed by men who were poles apart in their basic theses and attitudes, making for exciting give and take. A brother from Florida College traded ideas with an Abilene minister on the church's social responsibilities, and modern versions of the Bible were criticized by a "King James' man" and defended by a scholar from Harding.

I saw drama in the discussion on truth and tolerance, for it posed a confrontation between what I would call "the new look" with the old, one of our bold ones alongside a "keeper of orthodoxy" from Dallas. To the one *truth* is never quite within our grasp, so we must ever long and search for it, showing tolerance for those who struggle with us in the quest. This was unthinkable to the other who sees truth in much simpler terms, for it is a matter of taking the Book for what it says, which is of course what us good Church of Christ folk have been doing all along.

The association was delightful and wholesome, making for a healthy-minded religion, to use William James' term, instead of what we so often have. The students were home on vacation, leaving the dorms available to preachers who like to save money. There were two or three of the old boys around whom I had debated back when, and while one of them would have taken up where we left off 15 years ago with a little encouragement, it was a different atmosphere this time.

We are a different people than we were just a few years ago. The Holy Spirit, who was persistent in such problem cases as Peter and Jonah, is working on us. The fruit of his effort was evident at Abilene. Thanks be to God!—*the Editor*

UNITY FORUM IN ATLANTA

The Sixth Annual Unity Forum will be conducted July 1-3 on the campus of Atlanta Christian College in Atlanta, Ga. It is sponsored this year by a committee composed of men from the major wings of the Restoration Movement. Participants and subjects discussed will be announced later, but we urge you to make your plans to attend.

AMAZING GUILT, AMAZING GRACE

MARVIN J. PARRISH

Guilt feelings are a burden to many of us in the Church of Christ. It is common for many of us to fall into a recurring cycle of authority-seeking, authoritarianism, legalism, unrealistic aspirations, conflict and failure. Upon failing we feel guilty and the cycle begins again. Now let me indicate more precisely what I mean.

Overwhelmed with guilt we are desperately in need of some way to resolve it. We become authority seekers. When one is physically ill he generally feels more confident and secure upon hearing good news from an authoritative physician than he would were he forced to rely on the assessment of some unschooled friend. When one finds himself in spiritual distress he also seeks an authoritative source for relief. Within Christendom the authoritative source proclaims that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." That should settle the issue, but often it does not. For many Christians lingering doubts remain as to the completeness of their atonement. Such doubts are often unconscious; that is, the individual is not aware of his doubts, but they are really there just the same. And they have a profound effect on his behavior.

In such situations one's doubts are kept out of consciousness by the aid of an ego defense mechanism referred to as "reaction formation." A person who engages in behavior which is opposite in value and direction to impulses he has repressed is said to be utilizing this mechanism of defense. For example, a mother who has hostile and hateful feelings toward her son and finding them objectionable in her value system might repress the hate and hostility and shower the child with an overabundance of toys—all the while convincing herself quite completely in her own conscious mind that she loves her child dearly.

A similar process occurs in many in the Church of Christ. It may work something like the following: One's lingering doubts about atonement are repressed and a reaction formation of dogmatic assurance and proclamation of one's own salvation ensue. The rightness of the specific steps one has taken in achieving it are proclaimed not only as sufficient but as the only possible way in which salvation can be achieved. At this point our hypothetical Christian can be considered an "authoritarian personality." Just appealing to authority is not sufficient. He must also strongly identify with that authority. In fact his identification is so strong that he may no longer be able to distinguish the authority from himself. "It is not what I say; it is what God (or the Bible) says." This sequence of psychological events helps mitigate these persistent feelings of guilt. However, as long as the belief system remains intact this psychological maneuvering must continue.

We then have a kind of repetition compulsion in operation. Obsessed with guilt our brother must compulsively go through a series of detailed requirements. By being compulsively faithful to this routine (proclaimed as the only way) our member reduces his feelings of guilt. At this point we have all of the necessary ingredients for legalism. The

legalist must urge compliance with the letter of the law. He feels less anxious when he can be certain he has rigidly followed certain objective steps. To allow the system to be altered would remove its pre-eminent status and hence cast doubt on the authority.

Our legalist is caught in a stressing predicament. The biblical concept of the grace of God is too abstract in his system to have substantial practical consequences. His acute awareness of his own guilt coupled with the belief that he cannot be saved by his works leaves him in a real dilemma. He then must work out his own salvation through fear and trembling within a concrete, authoritarian, legalistic system which really stresses neither grace nor works but strict compliance with public rituals and unfaltering acceptance of in-group beliefs. This is the way the Church of Christ measures faithfulness to God. It seems like a sublimated way in which we "do our alms before men."

A person within this system is already saddled with guilt and must engage himself in rather elaborate psychological action in order to handle it. However, a highly legalistic system is so confining and so constricting that it is well nigh impossible to comply with its demands all of the time—even within the sheltering confines of the local congregation or the Christian college campus. And failure to comply with its demands are so objective and so obvious ("I did not see you at church last Sunday") that it is difficult for the lawbreaker to find adequate psychological defenses for it. His only alternative within this tightly structured psychological system is to either feel guilty or bow out of the system. Bowing out, however, does not necessarily reduce the guilt. The acute feelings of guilt reinitiate this seemingly endless cycle.

On top of all this such a highly structured legalistic system cannot help but pave the way for conflicts when one steps into the real world. Caught in a conflict one feels condemned either way he elects to resolve it. It is sort of like opting for the lesser of two evils. However, a legalistic system does not allow one to exercise such options. The "lesser of two evils," now called faithfulness, is already determined. The system has the answer in black and white—and even makes one feel guilty for having a supposed alternative in the first place. Unfortunately, being faithful in this system does not guarantee being happy nor does it guarantee a satisfactory degree of psychological or emotional stability. If you do not believe that the system makes unrealistic demands, be honest with yourself and try to recall how many times you went against it when you were an adolescent or a young adult—or maybe even now. Or if you think you have not ever gone against it—perhaps because of circumstances or parental confinement —how many times did you really want to?

Life by its very nature involves one in risk, frustration, and uncertainty. It could well be that the most significant psychological result of the authoritarian-legalistic Church of Church philosophy is that it leaves its adherent with so little with which he can face up to life.

The kind of emotional problems we have in the Church of Christ invites further conflict since they are considered a sign of spiritual weakness.

One having such difficulties is not likely to admit it even to himself until he is beset with relatively severe problems. Even when he admits his need for help, he is ambivalent as to where he should go to receive it. There is a marked distrust of mental health professionals. Our professional ministers are not trained to deal with such problems and hence are unequipped to handle them in a therapeutic manner. This weakness is unfortunate because ministers are more often consulted by persons with emotional problems than are psychologists and psychiatrists.

Suggestions are not solutions, but I will offer a few anyway. One suggestion is that we should be realistic and do at least one, but preferably both, of the following:

1) Encourage at least some minimal level of psychological sophistication for our professional ministers by providing some relevant psychological training. For example, it would be good for us to educate our professional ministers on how and when to consult with appropriate mental health professionals. I think it would be desirable for some ministers to also acquire some practical training in clinical installations as well.

2) Educate the membership of the Church of Christ on the advisability of acquiring the services of a psychiatrists or psychologist when their services seem indicated. One needs to be selective, of course, just as one should be when he needs the services of a physician or a dentist or a mechanic. Here again, the minister could be of some service were he so trained or so inclined.

Another suggestion, more closely aligned with prevention than with cure, is that *we should proclaim through word and action a God of love.* We have been so God-fearing a people that we have almost been afraid to do anything for fear it might be wrong and we would reap nothing for our efforts but the terrible wrath of God. We have often been afraid to perform good works in the world for fear of going to hell because of the method we used. So we sat on our talent and did nothing.

God gave us love; Jesus gave us hope. Anyone who has learned how to both give and receive these two enduring qualities is on the right path to good mental health and meaningful and lasting religious faith.

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Weekend Mini-Meetings

In the last issue of this journal I offered myself to those who might be able to use me as a resource person in gatherings in their home over a week-end. If an interested party can gather 12 to 18, more or less, in some quiet place who would be willing to exchange ideas with me sitting in, then I'll go, the Lord granting me the wherewith, anywhere in the nation and at my own expense, to be used in the way that my host thinks best.

I supposed there would be some response, but only mild response, for I had no way of knowing if this kind of ministry would have any appeal. I am pleased to report that I am already engaged for most of my available weekends for the rest of the year. Several phone calls came the day the journal was delivered. Then came the letters. I will be spending weekends from Connecticut to California, along

with several states in between. Several in Texas will make it possible for me to get my breath in between the longer trips.

There are four or five weekends yet uncommitted, so you can still invite me if you desire. If there is an overflow, I may be able to do double-time during the summer months.

One thing about this that especially gratifies me: nearly all the invitations, if not all, are from my own Church of Christ folk. Some from preachers, some from elders, some from the rank and file, but they are all "my folks," the very ones I am especially eager to serve. This does not mean, not in the least, that I am not also pleased to visit with and work with other brothers and sisters in discipledom. It is just a fact of life that one who does what I have been trying to do is often cut off by those who have nourished him, rejected by his own people. I could have run off and joined the Disciples long ago, and I don't think that would have been tantamount to leaving Christ, but it is a matter of conviction on my part. I have a work to do among my own kind of Church of Christ folk. That is where I was when God found me. So when *they* write and suggest that we do something together, I am especially glad. It is one of the Lord's *special* gifts to me.

But this paper goes to many in other backgrounds of our Movement. Such ones know that I move freely among all such groups, that I love them all, and that I consider all of them my brothers equally. And I *do* indeed desire to be with such ones more, not less. And I *do* urge you to give me the chance to serve you too.

I am not doing too well in explaining why I am especially pleased to go among my kind of Church of Christ people without sounding like a sectarian, so I'll quit trying. It is sort of like talking about Mother's cooking. It isn't exactly logical, but it makes sense to me!

BOOK NOTES

Because of a special purchase we have made we can offer you for only 3.00 the hardbound edition of *Raccoon John Smith,* by Louis Cochran, which originally cost 4.95. This is a big bargain and it is going out of print, so if you want the story, told excitingly, of the famous Kentucky pioneer preacher, you had better get with this one. The soft cover edition of the companion volume by Louis Cochran, *The Fool of God,* also by Louis Cochran, is available for 1.95.

Also by special purchase we can offer the following at our biggest bargain ever, and they are all substantial books, well worth your time, and they are hardbound editions. These books are but 1.00 each. Order one or all at 1.00 each. The original price is in parenthesis.

The Relationship of Baptism to Church Membership by Belcastro (4.50) is an historical and theological survey of baptism from apostles until now, with emphasis upon the positions taken by Restoration leaders.

General Jim, by Davis (3.00) is the story of James A. Garfield, with emphasis upon his relationship to the Restoration Movement. Especially suitable for youth.

Preaching on Old Testament

Themes, by Lemmon (2.50) is a collection of lessons from the prophets by outstanding ministers within the Christian Churches-Churches of Christ. J. P. Sanders of the Church of Christ has one on "The Stature of Moses."

Preaching on Race by West (3.50) is just what its title indicates. If we had had more of this kind of teaching all along, we might have avoided many problems. You'll like his "Killing the Right Snakes" and "Whites Up Front!"

Let's Get Married, by Crook (1.95) is a manual for engaged couples; a nice looking little volume, and most appropriate to hand to young folk thinking of marriage.

A Saturday Night Talk with God by Grafton (2.95) is a book of meditations and all sorts of spiritual goodies; the introduction is by Ralph Sockman, and it is a Sockman sort of book. It is ideal "quickie" reading. By an outstanding Disciples minister.

This Sacred Hour by Bruner (2.00) is just what you've been looking for if you've wanted something to enhance your words at the Lord's Table, or your own meditation at the Supper, along with other devotionals.

For only 8.95 we will send you a copy of the new best-seller, *The New English Bible.* You must have one of these, sooner or later, and they may cost more later.

We have a fresh supply of *A Quest for Christian America,* by David Edwin Harrell of the *conservative* Church of Christ wing, but published by Disciples of Christ Historical Society. It is a cultural history of our Movement, dealing especially with slavery, the Civil War, and economics.

We can send you the abridged edition of *Millennial Harbinger* in two large, handsome volumes for only 9.50. This is the best of Campbell as an editor for 40 years.

A new book entitled *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition,* by Eugene Osterhaven, will be of interest to those with the Restoration mind, for there are valuable comparisons to be drawn between the traditions. One of his chapters is on the continuing need for renewal, and he is concerned with the meaning of "Reform" and what its values are to the modern church in much the same way that we are concerned with *Restoration.* Paperback makes it only 3.45.